

BiH Media Round-up, 31/5/2002

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October Elections

Dnevni Avaz (front page) reports that the **SDA** has officially nominated its president, Sulejman Tihic, for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, thereby directly challenging its rival parties, the SDP and the Party for BiH, to come up with their candidates for the post. Although the Sarajevo weekly **Slobodna Bosna** writes that the two parties will most likely nominate their own leaders, **Zlatko Lagumdžija** and **Haris Silajdzic** (founder and 'spiritual leader') respectively, for the Presidency, the daily notes that the former has doubts about the post and about the possibility of winning Bosniak votes in such a strong competition. According to **Dnevni Avaz**, Lagumdžija will most likely decide to lead the list of SDP candidates for the BiH Parliament and leave the candidacy for the Presidency post to someone else. In this case, the Alliance would also avoid the likely inner conflict and prevent Bosniak votes from splintering.

S BiH's Safet Halilovic told the daily that this party and Silajdzic will make their final decision on candidacy for the Presidency by the end of the next week.

Glas Srpski reports that the SDA decision to nominate its Vice President, Sulejman Tihic, as a candidate for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, provoked different comments and dilemmas because in the last elections, he voted in the RS. The BiH Election Commission said it will issue an opinion on Tihic's candidacy only after the submission of the candidate lists, which should take place between June 8 and July 12. **Glas Srpski** also writes that "OSCE reminds us that only those voters who are registered in the Federation can be nominated to run as the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency." In the last elections, Tihic was registered as a voter in the RS (in Bosanski Samac), where he repossessed his property. The daily quotes Tihic as saying that he has been registered as living in Sarajevo for more than six months now, and therefore has a right to be put forth as a candidate for the Presidency.

Oslobodjenje reports (p.3) that, after a Wednesday meeting in the residence of the US Ambassador with representatives of the New Croat Initiative (**NHI**), Croat Peasant Party (**HSS**), Croat Democratic Union (**HDU**) and the Party Working for Prosperity, the International Community expressed strong support for the formation of an all-Croat coalition of parties before the upcoming elections. "Representatives of the International Community believe it is necessary to have a movement within the Croat political body which would be a rival to the HDZ at the October elections. This could be done only by strengthening Croat political parties and gathering them all in one coalition," one of the (anonymous) participants of the meeting told the daily. The same source said that although there were no major disagreements between the parties, their representatives agreed to meet one more time to make their final decisions. This has to take place before June 17, the deadline for registering parties and coalitions for the upcoming elections. **Oslobodjenje** reports that the next meeting will take place in the residence of the British ambassador in BiH, Ian Cliff.

Slobodna Bosna's Asim Metiljevic writes that, according to available information, the election of the Serb

member of the BiH Presidency will be completed in an easiest way. *"The two governing political parties in the RS, have already agreed that the PDP would nominate a candidate for the BiH Presidency as the SDS would nominate a candidate for the RS President. Bearing in mind a real strength of this informal coalition, which is being supported by more than 350,000 voters in the RS, it is almost certain that Mladen Ivanic will be elected the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, as Mirko Sarovic will be re-elected RS President,"* Metiljevic writes. He concluded that the most serious candidates for the Croat member of the BiH Presidency would be the NHI nominee, Drago Bilandzija, and HDZ's Barisa Colak.

In a column for **Vecernji List**, **Zdenko Cosic** writes that Ashdown's address is *"the last event in a series of events, which were said to be historical."* Cosic notes that his announcement that he will fight against crime drew great attention and caused optimism, however, Cosic says, the experience has taught BiH citizens that it is much easier to reveal a problem than to resolve it. He writes that similar messages were coming from the OHR at the time when Wolfgang Petritsch was the High Representative, and when he too was announcing that he will publish the evidence about the connection between mafia and politicians, however, they were not presented to the public. Cosic says that it is clear now that the goal of these actions was not to prevent crime but to pull down and stop the *"unacceptable political program of one people."* Cosic concludes that, in spite of the initial optimism, "people will be afraid of the future for a long time, because there have always been a lot of nice speeches and promises."

Vecernji list carries an interview with Stefo Masatovic, the President of Association of Croat Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons in BiH, in which he says that because of a mistake of the Election Commission which sent 40,000 registration applications to Croatia where around 80,000 refugees from BiH live, about 60,000 Croats will not be able to vote in the October elections. He adds that voters who are registering in Croatia have to pay for the postage when sending their applications, while voters in BiH do not have such an expenditure. The third mistake of the Election Commission, in Masatovic's opinion, is engaging mobile teams for registration within BiH and not having them working in Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro where majority of refugees from BiH live. Masatovic added that in last years about 200,000 Croats from BiH have obtained or asked for asylum in third countries.

CAFAO: RS Customs Administration Affair

The RS Interior Minister, **Dragomir Jovicic**, denied the allegations expressed by the SNSD leader (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats), **Milorad Dodik**, that the Ministry was involved in crime and corruption in the RS Customs Administration and privatization process. **Glas Srpski** quotes Jovicic as saying that an investigation was launched in the case of the RS Customs Administration and that the results of it will be presented to the public. **Nezavisne Novine** reports on its front page that the Interior Minister indicated that RS Ministry is aware that racketeering is taking place in the bidding process of state companies, but that it is still unable to prove it, due to the lack of evidence and unwillingness of people to report it.

The President of the **RS Socialist Party**, Petar Djokic, requested a thorough investigation of the developments in the RS Customs Administration, as well as adequate measures to be taken against those responsible regardless of their party membership.

Vecernji List quotes the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, as saying that some 200 million KM were lost in the affair in the RS Customs Administration. According to the daily, some of these funds were also used to finance the hiding of Radovan Karadzic.

Nezavisne Novine carries comments and views of the delegates in the RS National Assembly pertaining to the developments in the RS Customs Administration:

Miroslav Mikes (RS Socialist Party): *"The Government has already made the logical steps: it informed the public on the developments in the Customs Administration and established an investigation team showing that the law is stronger than politics. If it is proved that criminal activities took place, the authorized institutions should penalize those responsible, regardless of their party membership."*

Jovan Mitrovic (Democratic National Alliance): *"The CAFAO report is correct. The Government can no longer say that it is not organized crime. The issue has to be solved in one package – starting with the suspension of the RS Customs Administration Director and all other involved."*

Vukasin Vojinovic (SDS): *"The Government should have no dilemma whatsoever whether to undertake concrete measures or not. Those who are responsible should be dismissed. I support the dismissal of such people, regardless of their party membership. In doing so, the Government will enjoy support of all members of the Parliament."*

Krstan Simic (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats): *"The Government should ask for a special session of the Parliament to discuss the overall criminalization of society. If the CAFAO report proves to be true, the Government should resign due to the fact that it supported the report presented by the RS Customs Administration. They (the Government) supported it and should be held accountable for it."*

Sulejman Tihic (SDA): *"An investigation should be launched against those who committed any crimes and, if proven guilty, they should be dismissed. It would be logical that the highest officials of the RS Customs Administration resign."*

Nevenka Trifkovic (PDP) – *"If the CAFAO report proves to be correct, the RS Government will have to take appropriate measures. We shall request the Government to ask authorized institutions to undertake concrete steps against individuals involved in criminal activities in the RS Customs Administration, regardless of their party membership."*

Pogorelica Case: Suspects to stay in detention

Oslobodjenje (front page) reports that the three chief suspects in the so-called Pogorelica case, Bakir Alispahic, Irfan Ljevakovic and Enver Mujezinovic, will remain in custody for additional two months. The three, alongside several high-ranking police officials, Edhem Veladzic and Ejub Ikic, were charged with espionage as well as with setting up and running a terrorist-training camp in Pogorelica, which was dismantled in 1995 by IFOR.

BiH-FRY Inter-state Council: Free Trade between two countries takes effect on Friday

Nezavisne Novine (front page) reports that senior delegations of BiH and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia met on Thursday in Belgrade for a session of the **Inter-state Council** between the two countries and discussed the strengthening of the ties between BiH and the FRY. The Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic, said after the session that the Agreement on Free Trade between the countries will take effect on June 1 and stressed that their inter-state relations are rapidly improving. The session was attended by all three members of the BiH Presidency and the FRY Minister of Foreign Affairs, Goran Svilanovic.

Oslobodjenje reports that the two delegations did not discuss the controversial BiH law suit against Yugoslavia on charges of genocide before the International Criminal Court.

(The same item was reported on by **Dnevni Avaz**, p.4, **Oslobodjenje**, p.3 and all electronic media)

High Representative's activities: Ashdown hold the first Cabinet meeting

The High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, held on Thursday the first meeting with the so-called Cabinet of representatives of international organizations in BiH in order to discuss a number of the ongoing issues in the country. *"The meeting was very productive as number of ideas and information were exchanged. Ashdown informed the other members about his travels in BiH, which took place early in the week, and thanked SFOR and*

other international organizations for their assistance," Ashdown's chief spokesperson, **Julian Braithwaite**, told **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 2).

He also said that Ashdown is very satisfied with his visits to Mostar, Bijeljina, Citluk and Banja Luka, in particular because he managed to hear and see what ordinary people have to say. Braithwaite said that the new High Representative was impressed with the production in the Bobita company in Citluk and would like to see the OHR more involved in a dialogue with small businessmen across the country and hear their advice on the economic reform. *"The High Representative was especially touched by what he saw in Bijeljina – the day-to-day life of refugees and DPs. He believes that Roma in this town are in particularly difficult position, as they are completely forgotten and are living on the existential margin."*

Braithwaite also said that Ashdown is planning to have these Cabinet meetings every week in order to continue coordinating the work of international organizations in BiH.

Dnevni Avaz reports that the High Representative addressed last night the BiH public via TV channels of the FTV and the RTRS. In his **speech to the citizens of BiH**, Ashdown once again enumerated his priorities in this country and stressed that BiH is facing a long and a hard way ahead in order to join European institutions.

Jutarnje Novine on its front page ("Bosnian ghetto or the way to Europe") also reports on the last night's address by Ashdown and carries lengthy excerpts from his speech. **Nezavisne Novine** ("Vote for the future, reforms and your children", p.6) and **Dnevni List** ("I believe in BiH", p. 4) also prominently cover the address – carry the full text of the speech.

The President and the Vice President of the Federation, **Safet Halilovic** and **Karlo Filipovic**, received on Wednesday the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, and discussed with him his main priorities in BiH. Ashdown informed the senior Federation officials about his plan to fight against crime and corruption and on the establishment of the rule of law in the country. **Jutarnje Novine** reports that Halilovic and Filipovic expressed their support for the consistent implementation of the constitutional reform in the entities.

Azra Ahmetovic, the BiH Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, in an interview for **Slobodna Bosna** comments on Ashdown's speech: *"When it comes to the responsibilities of my Ministry, the newly-appointed High Representative mentioned (in his inaugural speech delivered to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly) exactly the issues on which we have been intensively working in the past years. One of them is drafting a strategy on the BiH economic development. Six years after the war, BiH is too late when it is about economic reforms and the post-war damages are therefore bigger than those made during the war."*

Glas Srpski quotes **Petar Djokic** of the RS Socialist Party as saying that it is very difficult to accept the Decisions imposed by the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, as they *"undermined the system which created a dialogue between all the different sides"*. According to Djokic, his Party expects the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, to reopen dialogue of all sides involved in the process of resolving BiH problems.

At yesterday's press conference in Sarajevo, OHR spokesperson, **Patrik Volf**, said that the new High Representative strongly supports the last week's decision imposed by his predecessor, Wolfgang Petritsch. *"We want to put on the record and firmly so: The High Representative Paddy Ashdown fully supports last week's decisions on judicial reform. These will provide for a professional, fair and de-politicized judiciary, which is at the core to establish the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These decisions are now law and the High Representative's view is that they need to be implemented in full."* **Dnevni Avaz**, which carries this statement (p.2), also quotes Volf as saying that the OHR welcomed the adoption of the State Budget by the BiH Parliament's House of Representatives and urged delegates in the House of Peoples to do the same without delay.

In a leading column in **Oslobodjenje**, **Hamza Baksic** commends the platform of the new High Representative, in particular his insistence on the fight against crime and corruption, opening of new jobs and a thorough economic and judicial reform. *"It was a high time that someone comes out and tell us that 'Europe as a goal is not some abstract idea, some phrase from a meaningless political life,'"* writes Baksic, adding however, that the Ashdown's success in BiH will to an extent depend on the arrest of the indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic. For, he argues, Karadzic's presence in this country has become not only the indicator of its credibility but also of the credibility of the International Community. *"Radovan Karadzic is not only physically demonstratively present, but his political influence is also doubtless."*

In an opining column in **BH Dani**, **Senad Pecanin** comments on the arrival of the new High Representative to BiH: *"From a several sources I have learned as to how seriously Paddy Ashdown had been preparing for his arrival in Sarajevo. That is why I almost feel sorry for him because of the every day shocks he will face here. I am curious to see what his personal feelings will be when, on a way towards his European vision of BiH, he faces numerous demonstrations of the most vulgar fascism and crime,"* writes Pecanin. BH Dani also declare Ashdown its Person in Focus, describing him as a British politician with a quite different approach towards BiH, alluding to the Lord Carrington or David Owen.

In a statement for the press, the **Croat Party of Rights** (HSP) welcomed the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, and commended his platform in BiH, expressing hope that he will be able to resolve, what it calls, the Croat question in BiH.

Jutarnji list reports that a member of the British Foreign Office in charge of the Southeast Europe, Denis MacShane, said that the Croatian President, **Stipe Mesic**, together with the FRY President, **Vojislav Kostunica**, accepted the initiative to visit the High Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown. According to the daily, the two should together welcome Ashdown and express support to his work.

Vecernji List reports that, apart from his official Deputies, the main associates of the new High Representative in BiH, will be the Head of the EU Police and one CAFAO official. The daily notes that, in this way, Paddy Ashdown will have the authorities greater than those of the UN SRSG, Jacques Paul Klein. The daily noted that the *"entire world welcomed the High Representative's address before the Parliament and the list of his priorities in BiH."*

ERONET Case

Stipe Prlic, the Manager of **HPT Mostar**, said on Wednesday that the HPT Mostar postponed shutting down of the Eronet signal and it extended the deadline given to Hercegovacka Banka and Alpina Komerc for another 15 days. **Dnevni Avaz** quotes Prlic as saying that the HPT decided on this move after it received a letter from the Provisional Administrator of the Hercegovacka Banka, Toby Robinson, in which she writes that the bank is willing to return more than one percent of shares to the HPT. Johan Verheyden, Robinson's spokesman, denied this information and added that if the HPT indeed shuts down the Eronet signal, the Provisional Administration will sue the HPT, Slavo Kukic and other persons sitting on the HPT Mostar Steering Board.

Vecernji list also reports on this case, noting that HPT Mostar's deadline given to Hercegovacka banka and Alpina komerc to return 51% of Eronet shares expires today. The daily writes that there is possibility that signal of Eronet will be shut down, which would result in 70,000 of its subscribers losing their contact with the world, and they would be probably able to communicate only within the network. In the meantime, the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) sent a letter to the HPT saying that they should not resolve the ownership problems "over subscribers' back".

NATO's George Robertson says SFOR trying hard to arrest Karadzic and Mladic

The NATO Secretary General, **George Robertson**, said on Thursday that regardless of being defeated in the world and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the terrorist organization al Qaeda has not been entirely destroyed. In an interview with **BHTV 1**, Robertson said that NATO is still very careful with extremists and fundamentalists, and added that SFOR is keeping an eye on them in BiH. Robertson also denied the statement by the chief prosecutor of the Hague Tribunal, Carla Del Ponte, that the NATO-led SFOR was not doing much to arrest war crime indictees, saying that SFOR was doing its utmost and spending a lot of time in attempts to arrest such people. He said that top fugitive war crime indictees, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, would end up in The Hague eventually. However, he emphasized that the local authorities were bearing the greatest responsibility for finding, arresting and extraditing war crime suspects to The Hague. *"Those from The Hague warrants are maybe happy today. We will be happy only one day... and that day is coming,"* Robertson said. Speaking about BiH's relation with the NATO, the Secretary General said that the distance between the two was enormous, since BiH is perhaps the only country in the world which has two armies.

Haris Silajdzic stands behind the attempt to remove Federation Police Chief?

Slobodna Dalmacija speculates that **Haris Silajdzic**, the founder of the Party for BiH, stands behind the attempt of Ramo Maslesa, the Federation Minister of Interior, to remove Dragan Lukac, the Chief of the Federation police. The daily notes that Silajdzic is behind the whole case because *"he wants to hide all crimes that he and his colleagues from the Party for BiH committed during the time when they were still SDA members."* According to the article, Silajdzic sought to remove Lukac because he started the investigations on the assassination of the former Federation Interior Minister, Jozo Leutar, and former AID (Bosniak Intelligence Service) official, Nedžad Ugljen.

Slobodna Dalmacija argues that Lukac's attempt to reveal the case of the hidden mortar rounds found in Mostar broke the camel's back and Silajdzic ordered Maslesa, his man, to remove Lukac. **Dnevni List** carries a similar article on this issue.

In an article on the same issue published in yesterday's edition of **Slobodna Bosna**, Suzana Mijatovic writes that, 15 days ago, the Federation President and the Party for BiH leader, Safet Halilovic, at Silajdzic's order, fiercely criticized Maslesa that *"his passive behavior is leaving room for Croat officials in the Interior Ministry, Tomislav Limov and Lukac, to take initiative."* According to the magazine, the attempt of Lukac's removal was also welcomed and supported by Hasan Cengic, the first post-war Federation Deputy Defense Minister, and Safet Orucevic, the former SDA-appointed Mayor of Mostar, who found themselves in an unpleasant situation after hidden mortar shells in the town had been unveiled. The magazine also claims that Maslesa revoked the decision on Lukac's dismissal following a letter by the newly-appointed High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, in which he warned him that he *"could be the first removed Minister in his mandate."*

Dnevni Avaz, however, rejects such allegations, claiming that the whole affair has a more personal background. According to the daily, Maslesa sought to name Mladen Milosavljevic, his long-time friend and a colleague, to this post, and accused the Party for BiH of exerting pressure on him only after being "squeezed" by the IPTF. Safet Halilovic of the S BiH (also the Federation President) denied allegations and said that he has not been in any contact with Maslesa in the past couple of weeks. He also said that Maslesa never informed him about his decision to remove Lukac. Halilovic strongly rejected rumors that Haris Silajdzic has been involved into this affair. *"It is precisely the opposite. S BiH has always been saying that certain police officials, who are virtually placed by the International Community under its control, are not responsible to their superiors in the state, but foreign services, including the IPTF."* Halilovic stressed that his party strongly disagrees with IPTF's move to force the Federation Interior Minister to withdraw his decision on Lukac's removal, because *"the function of the IPTF is to depoliticize the police, and not to lead its personnel policy."*

Headlines in Electronic Media

BHTV (19.00)

- Exclusive Interview with George Robertson, NATO SG: Al Q'aeda, Karadzic
- Session of the Inter-state Council between BiH and Yugoslavia: strengthening of bilateral ties
- BiH citizens cannot obtain their pre-war savings with Ljubljanska Banka
- Patrik Volf: Paddy Ashdown welcomes the adoption of the State Budget

FTV (19.30)

- Alliance fails to pay veterans' compensation to HVO soldiers
- Pressured by the IPTF and OHR, Federation Interior Minister withdraws decision to remove Chief of Police
- Pogorelica case: Alispahic, Mujezinovic and Ljevakovic to remain in detention

RTRS (19.30)

- RS National Assembly adopts the RS Election Law, the Law on Payment of debts
- Session of the Inter-state Council between BiH and Yugoslavia
- BiH Council of Ministers adopts the World Bank credit for road infrastructure

Headlines in print media

Dnevni list

- From tomorrow to Croatia only with ID card

Vecernji list

- Ashdown takes over Klein's authorities
- Stefo Masatovic, President of Association of Expelled Croats: 60,000 Croats can not take part in the elections

Glas Srpski

- Italian judiciary initiated an investigation against Montenegrin President, Milo Djukanovic: Milo in Mafia circles
- Zvornik: A church desecrated

Nezavisne Novine

- Session of the inter-state council for cooperation between BiH and FRY held in Belgrade: Free trade with Yugoslavia from tomorrow
- Jovan Mitrovic claims that Customs officers responsible for sugar smuggling were not suspended: The Head of Customs office in Sepak is Dragan Kalinic's godfather

Oslobodjenje

- Alispahic and others ordered two more months of detention

Jutarnje Novine

- Ashdown addresses BiH citizens: Bosnian ghetto or – to Europe

Dnevni Avaz

- Izetbegovic challenges Party for BiH and the SDP